

Jeppa Nelson House
150 West 1100 North
City of Pleasant Grove
Utah County
Utah

HABS No. UT-128-A

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UTAH
25-PLEAS,
3A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
JEPPA NELSON HOUSE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: 150 West 1100 North
Pleasant Grove, Utah

Quad: Timpanogos Cave, Utah

UTM: 12/437220/4469530

Dates of Construction: Residence: ca. 1885; Remodeled ca. 1921
Log Granary: ca. 1885

Present Owner: Henson Leon Hatch

Present Use: Vacant single family residence and
outbuilding

Significance: The log granary was likely built as a
grain and food produce storage
structure. It is architecturally intact
and typical of pioneer era vernacular
log construction.

The vernacular bungalow is the result of
modifications done to the ca. 1885 four
room rock house of Jeppa Nelson. Later
expanded to six rooms, the house was
stuccoed, given new porches and probably
a new roof in ca. 1921 by the Brinley
family. As the home was altered to
conform with the bungalow style then
popular in the United States, visible
signs of the earlier home were
completely obscured. The present
bungalow is architecturally intact and
representative of homes of its style.

Together, the two buildings represent
the architectural progression that
occurred locally and throughout Utah
between the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries.

Historians: Allen Roberts, Inc. and Dr. Martha
Bradley Cooper/Roberts Architects, Inc.,
Salt Lake City, Utah. December 1991.

Photographer: Aleksander Kecor, Salt Lake City, Utah.
November 1991.

I. HISTORY

A. Introduction

The two structures located on the lot at 150 west 1100 North in Pleasant grove serve to document aspects of the area's history. The single family residence and granary embody elements of the three earliest stages of development in the architectural, social, and economic history of Pleasant Grove. On this property the evolution of rural Mormon architecture can be traced from a simple mid-nineteenth century log structure, to a late-nineteenth century vernacular "soft rock" home, to an early twentieth century "four-square" bungalow residence. The architectural progression evident in these structures parallels and reflects the evolution of architectural and social complexity experienced throughout this rural Utah town and in the Mormon cultural region generally.

B. Settlement of Utah County

Thirty-three Mormon families composed the first group of settlers that entered Utah Valley in 1859.¹ They built their new homes in a log fort along the south bank of a stream a mile and one-half east of the Utah Lake and called it "Fort Utah". This settlement, soon known as Provo City, became the hub of the series of Mormon communities that stretched both north and south across the valley. The population would eventually be concentrated in towns located between the eastern edge of the lake and the abrupt rise of the Wasatch Mountains.

Brigham Young, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints(Mormons), introduced the idea of a new settlement in Utah Valley to the north of Provo at a special conference of the LDS church held in Salt Lake City on September 8, 1850. A group of seven families was sent to begin the new community, among whom were George S. Clark, John G. Holman, and Lewis Harvey.² The group stopped at the base of Mt. Timpanogos near the mouths of Grove Creek and Battle Creek Canyons. Setting up camp in a grove of cottonwood trees, they called their new settlement Pleasant Grove. Within days the men began constructing log houses in close proximity to one another to serve as protection from the Indians. The cabins measured between twelve and fourteen feet wide. Flat roofs covered with mud and willows and dirt floors finished off these first homes.³

After the first year many of the more adventuresome settlers moved out of the fort and began building more permanent structures out of local materials. As in other Mormon pioneer communities, Pleasant Grove's first homes were built of logs. These early log structures speak to the early

limitation of materials as well as the ethnicity of the settling group. The first log buildings embodied typical building techniques of northern Europe with walls constructed of alternating tiers of horizontally laid timbers secured at the corners by interlocking notched (corner timbering).⁴ The adzed log walls were so tightly fitted that they needed little of the chinking commonly found in structures built of round logs. The lack of plentiful forests and the mormon interest in Building more substantial and imposing structures led to the early choice of adobe, stone, and eventually brick, instead of logs or cut timbers, for the construction of homes and public buildings. Still, long after initial settlement, log construction was employed for agricultural buildings such as barns, granaries, stables and other outbuildings. Indeed, log buildings were a consistent part of the stat's architectural landscape well into the twentieth century.⁵

Within three years of settlement, the population in Pleasant Grove had reached 290, consisting of a diverse group of English, Danish, and Swedish immigrants along with American Mormon settlers.⁶ Immigrant continued to be drawn to the rich alluvial soil of Pleasant Grove and two years later, in January of 1855 when the town was incorporated, the population had doubled to reach 633.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, population steadily increased and the town experienced socioeconomic diversification. As communication and transportation to the area improved, Pleasant Grove's stature grew through its connection to the outside world. In 1870 a telegraph office was opened in Beers' store. The single telephone installed in the Clark Brothers' store in 1890 inaugurated Pleasant Grove's first telephone system. Perhaps no change was as dramatic and enduring in its impact on Pleasant Grove that the coming of the railroad. In 1873, the Utah Southern Railroad was built through Pleasant Grove linking it with other Utah County towns and providing direct and efficient access to Salt Lake City. The Orem line of the electric railroad system built through Utah County in 1913 served the people of Pleasant Grove until 1946 when it was discontinued because of superior service offered by bus lines.⁷

Although the railroad in 1873 ended the period of relative isolation for this rural Utah town, it did not cause the disruptive change in community fabric that it did in Salt Lake City and Ogden. Goods and services did diversify because of the railroad, but the nature of the populace did not. Pleasant Grove continued to be upwards of ninety percent Mormon well into the twentieth century and the church continued to be the center of the social, religious, and cultural life of the community. Nevertheless, secular

influences became more pronounced and society and economic life stratified as the non-farming population increased.

After the turn of the century, a variety of public services became available in Pleasant Grove. Through the combined efforts of Pleasant Grove, American Fork, and Lehi, a new electrical power plant in American Fork Canyon furnished electricity to homes throughout the area.⁸ On December 12, 1900 electrical lights burned for the first time in Pleasant Grove. Six years later the Utah Power and Light Company built the Battle Creek Station in Pleasant Grove, furnishing services and employment for many citizens of the town. In 1905-1906, the city-wide water system was updated. Sidewalk paving began in 1912.⁹ In 1917 the Pleasant Grove High School Alumni association organized a fundraising campaign for a free public library.

The town's economic life diversified as well. An enterprising group of citizens organized the Pleasant Grove Canning Company in 1913 to service the area's agricultural production needs. The increased number and diversity of commercial establishments again reflected the impact of the railroad and the greater ease with which goods could be transported both in and out of the area.

C. The Jeppa Nelson Residence and Log Granary

Jeppa Nelson was a Swedish immigrant drawn to Pleasant Grove by stories of the favorable climate and chances for successful farming. His experience typifies that of Mormon immigrants who came to Utah to help build the Kingdom of God by colonizing rural areas throughout the Great Basin. The following sketch of Nelson and his family is drawn from a biography prepared by the Daughter of the Utah Pioneers.¹⁰

Nelson and his family joined the LDS church in 1871. Two years later he sold his prosperous farm and uprooted his wife, Anna, and their three children, Eliza, Hannah, and Swen, and emigrated to Utah to join the Mormons gathered in what they called "Zion". With the money he had left, after paying passage for travel to Utah, he purchased ten acres of land in what was then known as Pleasant Groves's "North Field". There Jeppa Nelson built for his family a dugout home complete with a dirt roof and dirt floor. This one-room house, whose walls rose half way out of the ground and stayed half way in, served the family through their first winter in the new land. The next fall the family cleared nine-and -one-half acres of sagebrush and rocks and planted enough grain, potatoes, and vegetables to support themselves through the next winter. After their first harvest, Nelson built a second room, this time above the ground. This room had a dirt roof and a wooden floor which made it much more comfortable for the family's use.

In 1885, Jeppa Nelson bought twenty additional acres of adjacent land on which he built a new four-room home of native stone known locally as "soft rock". Some years later he added two more rooms. During the same time period, Nelson also built "barns, a corn crib and other out buildings [that] had floors of rock that Jeppa had hauled from the hills and laid in the buildings as well as rock paths about the yard".¹¹ It is likely that the extant log building was part of this complex, although some researchers have suggested that it may have been built earlier in connection with a non-existing home which may have been built on the twenty acre parcel while it was owned by any one of its three previous owners (Jens C. Cornum, 1870; Henry Greenhalgh, 1872 and Niels Peter Larsen, 1877). However, since the granary has a rock foundation as described for "barns, a corn crib and other outbuildings" in the Nelson's primary quotation, and since there is no record of any earlier buildings on the twenty acres, the safest assumption is to associate the granary with the 1885 construction.

Regardless of its age and origin, Jeppa Nelson used his log structure as a storage building for the farm produce he sold to his neighbors. Although oral tradition also suggests that the log building was used as a house at least once, this is a questionable claim in that the building has no windows or chimneys, nor any physical evidence of human habitation.

D. The Brinkley Family Modifications

By the time Jeppa Nelson sold his farm to his son Swen J. Nelson in 1903, he owned fifty-three acres of land. The land stayed in the family only twelve more years before Swen sold it to James O. Bullock, Jr.¹² When Joseph Arthur and Ethel Driggs Brinley purchased the Nelson farm and house from Bullock in 1921, they added a bungalow style front porch to the house and stuccoed the rock exterior. Given the bungalow styling of the roof, dormer, eaves and brick chimneys, it is most likely that these elements also date from the ca. 1921 redesign.

These changes greatly altered the historic appearance of the ca. 1885 house but made it more consistent with the bungalow style popular throughout the country during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This style was adapted from the veranda style house of British India. In America it became the symbol of the emerging middle class. Bungalows were very popular and numerous in Utah between about 1905 through the 1920's. They were built in many stylistic variations, although the earliest ones were vernacular and showed vestigial elements carried over from the earlier Victorian era. It was also common in Utah to

"modernize" older buildings with bungaloid makeovers such as done by the Brinleys.

After her husband's death, Ethel Brinley lived in her bungalow home for several more years before selling it to Marion D. and Musetta Hatch of Vernal, Utah in 1934. Marion was a miner, farmer and an employee of the Utah State Training School in American Fork, Utah.¹³ Since their deaths in 1972, their son Henson Leon Hatch has owned the house. Both buildings are currently vacant.

III. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HOUSE

The ca. 1921 bungalow no longer shows signs of its 1880's appearance as a six-room vernacular rock house. The foundation and superstructure walls have been stuccoed with a smooth plaster finish. The windows are mostly one-over-one, double-hung sash types, typical of bungalow design. The pyramidal hip roof with its central, hip-roofed dormer, is suggestive of one-story four-square vernacular homes built throughout the state during the early bungalow period, ca. 1905-1920.¹⁴ The boxed, overhanging eaves, square porch posts and horizontal front picture window are moderately suggestive of Prairie Style influences. Otherwise, the building appears as an early twentieth century vernacular house. The brick chimneys, window and door openings and walls are untrimmed and devoid of decorative elements.

Like the other elevations, the front of the house is horizontal in emphasis. The stuccoed foundation wall rises about two feet above the ground. The main wall of this one-story exterior is also stuccoed in a smooth plaster finish. Entry is made up a three-step concrete stairway leading to a recessed porch covering both south and west-facing front doors. The porch is supported at its southwest corner by three square wooden posts, and at the east and north by the masonry walls and a single post. Above the posts is a tall, plain wood-board entablature enclosing a beam which supports the roof above. The roof is a pyramid hip of medium pitch. In the center of the roof is a small, wood-shingled, hip-roofed dormer with two two-over-two windows. The band of four windows in the front wall of the living room form a picture window with two central fixed sashes flanked by one-over-one units. In the recessed wall east of the south front door is a tall one-over-one, double-hung sash window typical of those throughout the remainder of the house. Aside from the brick moldings, the doors and windows are without trim, except for plain concrete sills and a match band across the short porch walls. The roof cornice is boxed with a plain wooden soffit and frieze. The general description of this elevation also applies to the other three elevations and will not be repeated hereinafter.

The west elevation features a central, open, projecting porch. The porch has a concrete base, two square wood posts and a hip roof. The porch is accessed by a flight of small concrete stairs along its west side. Beneath the porch is a single solid wood door. To the right of the door is a short one-over-one window. To the left of the door is a similar, taller window. A small horizontal window illuminates a basement space just above the ground level. In the center of the upper portion of the hip roof is a rectangular chimney made of cream-colored brick with a tapered concrete cap.

The north elevation is the plainest of all the sides. This rear wall of the house has a single door and , to the west of it, a single, story, one-over-one window.

The east elevation is also plain and features the only symmetrical wall. In the wall are two tall, one-over-one windows spaced equidistant from the wall's corners. Like the west elevation, the roof has a matching brick chimney in the upper center portion of the roof.

IV. ENDNOTES

1. Emma N. Huff, Compiler, Memories That Live: Utah County Centennial History, Salt Lake City, 1950, pp. 51-52.
2. Ibid., p. 162.
3. Ibid., p. 163.
4. Thomas Carter, "North European Horizontal Log Construction in the Sanpete-Sevier Valleys", Utah Historical Quarterly, 52(Winter 1984)1, p. 53.
5. Ibid., pp. 50-71.
6. Anonymous, One Hundred Years of Progress, Centennial Publication, Compiled and published at Pleasant Grove, Utah, on file at the State Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City, 1950, p. 9.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 12.
10. Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, A Brief Sketch of the Life of Jeppa Nelson and Ann Swenson Nelson, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Histories, III, on file at the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum, Salt Lake City, pp. 130-136.
11. Ibid.
12. The Desret News, 15 August 1941.
13. "Ethel Brinley Dies At home on Monday", Pleasant Grove Review, 17 December 1948, p. 1.
14. Thomas Carter and Peter Goss, Utah's Historic Architecture 1847-1940, A Guide, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), pp. 49-15.

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